


MEMORANDUM

PLACER COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Ed King, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer 

DATE: April 22, 2014

SUBJECT: LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION TO THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AND NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE REGARDING REINTRODUCTION OF LAHONTAN COUTHROAT TROUT IN THE TAHOE BASIN AND EASTERN PLACER COUNTY LAKES AND STREAMS.

ACTION REQUESTED: Authorize the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter of concern to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Nevada Department of Wildlife asking that they use caution and consider economic and recreation impacts when making management decisions regarding reintroduction of Lahontan cutthroat trout to the Tahoe Basin and eastern Placer County lakes and streams.

BACKGROUND: Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) were listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1970 and subsequently reclassified as threatened in 1975, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), to facilitate management and allow regulated angling. The species is native to the Lake Tahoe Basin and historically occupied most of the perennial stream systems, including interconnected lakes. By the 1950s, LCT were locally extirpated from Lake Tahoe as a result of wide-spread introduction of other non-native competing species such as rainbow trout, over-harvest and habitat modification. Successful reintroduction and establishment of LCT, under ESA criteria, requires removal of competing trout species which are favorable to recreational anglers.

Since the 1990s, the USFWS and other agencies including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) have worked to develop and implement management objectives for reintroducing LCT into the Truckee River watershed including Lake Tahoe and its tributaries.

USFWS reintroduction efforts to date have been implemented in Fallen Leaf Lake and its primary tributary, Glen Alpine Creek by the USFWS, and the USFS and CDFW have worked to restore LCT into Meiss Meadows. Currently, there is disagreement within the various regulatory agencies on how to further proceed with reintroduction efforts.

The Placer County Fish and Game Commission is concerned that large-scale removal of existing trout populations would adversely affect the current fishery that has formed the

basis of recreational and sport fishing in eastern Placer County for over one-hundred years. This change could severely affect recreation and tourism in our County. The Commission recommends a collaborative and coherent approach that preserves recreational and sport fishing opportunities while effectively meeting LCT reintroduction objectives.

On February 26, 2014, the Fish and Game Commission therefore voted (5 to 1) to recommend to your Board that a letter of concern be sent to the involved agencies asking that they use restraint when reestablishing LCT into eastern Placer County lakes and streams. Preceding this vote the Commission has researched this issue in recent years including hearing presentations from USFWS and CDFW fisheries staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL: This activity does not qualify as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

FISCAL IMPACT: This activity will result in no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter to the USFWS, CDFW and NDOW asking that they use caution and consider economic and recreation impacts when making management decisions regarding reintroduction of Lahontan cutthroat trout to the Tahoe Basin and other eastern Placer County lakes and streams.

Attachments:

1. Letters for Chairman addressed to USFWS, CDFW and NDOW
2. Request letter from Placer County Fish and Game Commission dated March 21, 2014